

1 What is claimed is:

2 1. An amplifier having dual modes of operation, comprising:

3 a first differential amplifier receiving a first pair of differential input signals and

4 having a first output terminal;

5 a second differential amplifier receiving a second pair of differential input signals

6 and having a second output terminal; and

7 circuitry for coupling the first and second differential amplifiers and controlled by

8 a control signal, wherein a first value of the control signal activates the circuitry so that

9 the first and second differential amplifiers provide a differential signal at the first and

10 second output terminals in response to the first and second pair of differential input

11 signals, and wherein a second value of the control signal deactivates the circuitry so that

12 the first and second differential amplifiers operate independently to provide single ended

13 signals at the first and second output terminals in response to the first and second pair of

14 differential input signals, respectively.

15 2. The amplifier of claim 1 wherein the first differential amplifier includes:

16 a first pair of transistors connected in series; and

17 a second pair of transistors connected in series,

18 wherein the first pair of transistors is connected in parallel with the second pair of

19 transistors.

20 3. The amplifier of claim 2 wherein the second differential amplifier includes:

21 a third pair of transistors connected in series; and

22 a fourth pair of transistors connected in series,

23 wherein the third pair of transistors is connected in parallel with the fourth pair of

24 transistors.

25 4. The amplifier of claim 1 wherein the first differential amplifier includes a first

26 transistor and the second differential amplifier includes a second transistor, wherein the

27 first and second transistors are connected in parallel, and wherein the control signal

28 activates and deactivates the first and second transistors.

29 5. The amplifier of claim 1 wherein the circuitry for coupling includes a coupling

30 transistor connected to the first and second differential amplifiers, wherein the control

31 signal activates and deactivates the coupling transistor.

32 6. The amplifier of claim 1, further including:

computer on which information resides, and the client computer depends on the server to deliver requested information and services. These services may involve searching for information and sending it back to the client, such as when a database on the Web is queried. Other examples of these services are the delivery of information and web pages through a web site, and the processing of incoming and outgoing email. Typically, the client is a user PC (or other web devices) employing a browser to connect to and search the servers. The servers (also known as hosts) are usually more powerful computers that house the data and databases. The client/server model enables the Web to be conceived of as acting like a limitless file storage medium distributed among thousands of host computers, all of which are accessible by any individual PC user.

A popular way of finding information on the Internet is to use search engines, also known as search tools and sometimes called Web crawlers or spiders. Search engines are essentially tools to search massive databases that one accessible via the Internet. Search engines typically don't present information in a hierarchical fashion. Instead, one searches through them similar to a database, by typing keywords that describe the desired information.

However, search engines' ability to assess electronic content is limited by the fact that they are merely software programs, inherently lacking the subtlety and flexibility of human judgment. This restricts a search engine's ability to determine what a web page is actually about. For example, a search engine scanning Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal," with its deliberately outrageous plan for raising Irish children as a food crop to be sold to English consumers, might conclude that the essay is about economics, agriculture, or

nutrition, but would be inherently unable to recognize the piece as a satirical work of Irish nationalism.

5 Because the ability to recognize aesthetic merit requires subtle human judgment, search engines are inherently incapable of identifying a good poem, a good song, or a good painting.

10 The shortcomings of the search engines also persist beyond the arts, where the subtleties of human judgment are required to identify sound medical advice, valid technical information, or insightful social and political commentary. Regardless of the type of content sought, quality is a characteristic that requires human judgment to identify.

15 With more and more content becoming available on the Internet, and search engines returning thousands upon thousands of results for each search, it is no longer enough simply to identify the web pages that are about a given subject. What users want to see are the web pages on that 20 subject that are of high quality.

25 Certain attempts that have been made to date to interject human judgment-based quality evaluation into the process of helping users find electronic content. For the most part, these have taken the form of directories. In a directory system, human editors are assigned responsibility for keeping up to date on what is noteworthy on the Internet in specific subject areas. When users go to a directory service, every link they see is to a web page that has been specifically 30 recommended in this manner. Major endeavors to categorize what is on the Internet using this technique include the volunteer-based Open Directory Project, whose work is available at www.dmoz.com, as well as the employee- and contractor-based efforts of the original Yahoo! ® directory service and About.com ™.

5 But with directory services, the number of individuals evaluating online content in any given area is always small. Most often it is limited to just one person. The user is also given no choice in whose evaluations he prefers to go by. Unfortunately, no single person or small group can effectively represent the tastes and quality standards of all users.

10 In order to effectively put diverse users in touch with the content that will meet their varied tastes and standards of quality, multiple and divergent evaluations of the same piece of content are needed. The user must also be able to pick the evaluator whose tastes he trusts.

15 Therefore, there is a need for a more effective system and method for searching content information in a large network of databases.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

20 In one embodiment, the present invention is directed to a method and system for identifying content in a computer network. The method and system include the capability of selecting a plurality of predetermined categories stored in a database; categorizing a plurality of items corresponding to one or more of the plurality of predetermined categories, by a plurality of categorizers, respectively; selecting a category from the plurality of predetermined categories; selecting a categorizer from the plurality of categorizers; and initiating 25 a search for one or more items in the computer network corresponding to the selected category and the selected categorizer. In one embodiment, results of the search may be displayed on a display and the results may be ordered based on a user selectable order.

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